

THE

# HISTORIAN

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OF HANCOCK COUNTY

*Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi*

MAY, 2001

## MEMBERSHIPS

It has been brought to my attention that some memberships have not yet been paid for 2001 and we do not want to loose a single member, so please check the address label on your **HISTORIAN**. Your "paid through" date appears on the label. If this does not match with your records, phone the office and we will correct it before the mad name-purger strikes again!

## MAY HAPPENINGS

The May meeting of the Hancock County Historical Society will be held at 12 noon on Thursday, May 17 at the Lobrano House, 108 Cue Street, Bay Saint Louis.

In anticipation of the pending action on the proposed Preservation Ordinance, we have scheduled Todd Sanders, Local Government Assistance Coordinator, Historic Preservation Division of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, as guest speaker for the meeting. He will address newly adopted Enabling Legislation which defines the powers and prerogatives of cities enacting preservation ordinances.

We have also invited the Mayor and City Council to attend so that we will all be better informed for whatever workshops may be needed to refine our present draft ordinance.

Lobrano House luncheons are always filled to the 60-seat capacity and since this particular meting will be of great importance to many members, please call early for reservations at \$6. 467-4090

(Continued on page 3)



THOMAS SHIELDS

From a portrait of Thomas Shields supplied to us by Maureen Murphy Singleton, a great, great granddaughter of Thomas Shields.

It was reproduced from a small broach that was passed down through the family.

During the first century of European presence on the Gulf Coast, references were always made to "The people *at the* Bay of Saint Louis": not "At Bay Saint Louis." However, at the beginning of the second century mail was being addressed to "Shieldsboro" which was named for Thomas Shields of the United States Navy who had obtained a Spanish Land Grant in 1789.

The name remained affixed to the small community from about 1802 until April 27, 1875 when the Mississippi Legislature officially changed it to Bay Saint Louis.

The post office at Shieldsboro was opened on October 11, 1819. John B. Toulme was the first postmaster and he

later became Mayor of the city.

We have recently received a document from Domenica Carriere of Shreveport pertaining to Thomas Shields and certain losses he sustained during the prelude to the famous battle of New Orleans at Chalmette, Louisiana in January 1815. This was a skirmish familiar to residents of the Bay and is honored by a "Magnolia Marker" that was erected on the beach at Ulman Avenue.

## REPORT OF RECOMMENDATION

"Report of the Committee on Naval Affairs, on the memorial of Thomas Shields, accompanied with a bill,



authorizing the payment of a sum of money to Thomas Shields.

"January 4, 1819. Read, and with the bill, committed to the committee of the whole, tomorrow.

"The Committee on Naval Affairs, to whom was referred the memorial of Thomas Shields, have had the same under consideration, and submit the following Report:

"The memorialist states, that commodore Shaw, whilst he commanded the naval forces of the United States on the New Orleans station, caused to be built a public storehouse for the use of the United States; that this storehouse was built at the bay of Saint Louis on a lot belonging to the memorialist, and by him voluntarily tendered for that purpose; that the said house at the time of the attack of the enemy at that point, on the 13th of December, 1814, contained stores (for the supply of the crews of vessels attached to the station,) belonging to the memorialist of the value of \$4,887.96.

"That previous to the attack of the enemy, the memorialist had erected, principally at his own expense, a small two gun battery, for the protection of the said store and the property contained in it; from which a fire so steady and well directed was kept up, that the enemy was baffled in his several attempts to effect a landing, till the night of the 13th of December, 1814, when a positive order was received by the person having charge of the said store, from lieutenant Jones, commanding the detachment of naval force on the station, directing the same to be blown up and destroyed, which was accordingly done; that adjacent to the said public store, was a building belonging to the memorialist, and materials for other building of the value of \$1,693.10 to which the fire produced by the burning of the public store, extended, whereby the said building and materials were totally destroyed.

"The memorialist states his whole loss occasioned by the burning of the public store aforesaid, to amount to the sum of \$6,581.06 cents, for which he prays remuneration from Congress

if they shall think his claim just.

"The committee having considered this case with attention, are of the opinion, that is supported by the testimony exhibited. The stores, which were probably destroyed by the burning of the public storehouse, by order of the United States officer, commanding on the station, to prevent their falling into the hands of the enemy, were lodged at the place by the memorialist, for the use of the naval force in the neighborhood; they were of the kind and quality always furnished for such purposes, by pursers in the navy, which was the office held by the memorialist, and the public store from which they could be easily and quickly put on board the vessels requiring them, appears to have been the most natural place for their deposit; that independent of the merits of the memorialist, in voluntarily tendering a situation for the erection and use of this building for public purposes, and erecting a battery principally at his own expense, the committee think, under all the circumstances of the case, compensation ought to be made to the memorialist for the loss of the stores aforesaid, and his house and building materials adjacent to the said storehouse, and consumed by the fire which caught from the burning of the same; and for this purpose, they herewith report a bill."

(Note: The above sentence contains 197 words and is the longest ever printed in the *Historian*.)

It is coincidental, though certainly fortuitous, that Thomas Shields' home stood on Beach Boulevard next to present day Hancock Bank. Tercentenary Park is in that location adding to the long list of "honors" there – the home of Thomas Shields, the first Hancock Bank, among the highest elevation on the Gulf of Mexico and lastly, Tercentenary Park.

At the time of Thomas Shields influence on the town, other communities were developing across the coast. In his wonderful book, *The Mississippi Gulf Coast: A Portrait of*

*a People*, Charles Sullivan describes the growth of the settlements.

"The growth of towns and trade on the Mississippi Gulf Coast in the antebellum period (1815-1861) resulted from a process, an invention, and a disease. The urbanization process of the towns flanking metropolitan areas of New Orleans and Mobile, the advent of steam power, the terror of yellow fever combined to produce a string of six "watering places" (resorts spas with curative waters) on the Mississippi littoral and simultaneously spawned commercial-industrial villages at bay heads and river mouths. The watering places, known as the "Six Sisters," were Shieldsboro (Bay St. Louis), Pass Christian, Mississippi City, Biloxi, Ocean Springs and Pascagoula.

"Shieldsboro and Pass Christian shared a common origin as watering places in the late colonial period. Creole Catholics tended to favor the first, while Protestant Anglos congregated in the latter. Because of their proximity to New Orleans and the early establishment of sailing sloop service between the two villages and that city, Shieldsboro and Pass Christian were the fastest growing of the *Six Sisters* in the pre-steamboat era.

"In 1829 seven hundred men of the Eighth Regiment, U.S. Infantry, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Zachary Taylor, built a road from the Pearl River to the western shore of the Bay of St. Louis. The medical officer attached to the troop cantonment at the road's terminus described a bayside strip of homes and summer cottages three or four miles in length with "the little village of Shieldsborough" in the middle. He characterized the area as a long-established summer retreat for the Creole population of New Orleans and the planters of the Natchez District." The small permanent population consisted primarily of descendants of original French and Spanish settlers.

"By 1842 Shieldsboro boasted a first-class hotel in addition to a number of boardinghouses."



The die was cast by this time and its reputation as a resort was established for the rest of the century. Bay Saint Louis had become, and remains until the present, a competitive resort destination.

On July 18, 1851 the *Daily Delta* of New Orleans described a proposed visit to Bay Saint Louis as follows:

"We can take any of the boats that leave daily the wharf at the end of the railroad, (Lake Pontchartrain) and shortly after partaking of a splendid dinner on board, find ourselves at the wharf of the venerable Bay of St. Louis, which long ere this great city was founded or thought of – was a respectable shipping town of Old France, whence boats departed for the French settlements on the Upper Mississippi, passing through Lakes Maurepas and Manchack. It is now a great summer resort of our citizens, who have many little cottages here, protected and overshadowed by fine old oaks.

"A very pleasant residence it is, indeed, for families – with good bathing, abundance of fish and fruit, and of very convenient distance from the city for business people who cannot be away long.

"There is a very comfortable Hotel at the Bay, kept by a courteous and agreeable gentleman, (Mr. Lovis) who spares no trouble to render his visitors comfortable."

The next week, the following article appeared in the *Daily Delta*.

"A most delightful entertainment was offered last Saturday to the denizens and visitors of the bay in the shape of a grand ball, given at the Hotel. Lovis, the proprietor treated his guests to abundance, comfort and amusement, with the liberality of one who understands the management of a house.

"Never should we have dreamed such bebies of the fair could be collected in the spacious ball room completely decorated and filled with a galaxy which rivaled in beauty of persona and dress, any reunion which it has been our lot to cast our eyes upon, not excepting our own fair city."

Charles Gray

### (Happening from page 1)

The bus trip to Jackson to see the Splendors of Spain Exhibit is nearly sold out so if you want to attend this event with us, please telephone the office to get on the list.

The bus will depart at 8 a.m. on Wednesday, June 14 and return about 6 p.m. We will have lunch in Jackson before touring the exhibit. (Lunch is not included in the \$30.00 price.)

As reported last issue, the floors at Lobrano House were being refinished: a task that is now complete and beautifully done. Thank you JoAnn and Rick George.

Also mentioned in the last issue, I delivered the collection of glass-slide photographs that were made by George Mallard to Douglas Mansfield of the photography department at Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College in Gautier. He was exuberant about them, the wonderful iron chest that contained them and even the manila envelopes containing them. It will take several weeks to clean and reproduce them but we will plan an exhibit for later in the summer.

Pat Wilson alerted the Board of Supervisors and us that about twenty-one live oak trees located within the boundaries of the Pearlington Cemetery appear to be under considerable stress. The Hancock County Historical Society maintains a register of large live oaks in the county and offers whatever limited protection we can.

The Board of Supervisors has reported the problem to Jackson and made an application for funds to diagnose and perhaps treat whatever the problem is. We understand that Trent Lott's office is investigating to see if the problem is associated with the recent similar symptoms experienced at parks and homes across the Gulf Coast. Please watch your own trees and report any obvious problems.

Irwin Cucullu is our representative who measures and dates oaks. If you have an especially large one, you may want to have it registered. There is a nominal charge but each tree is then issued a plaque bearing its name and signifying that it is registered.



### BALDWIN LODGE

We have been contacted numerous times by people who have "discovered" ruins of a building and swimming pool at the mouth of the Pearl River immediately south of the railroad tracks.

Since "history" is, in reality, lies agreed upon, we might well stop throwing cold water on their speculations of illegal or immoral uses of the property, but in reality, it was a lodge, the first in Mississippi when traveling from New Orleans.

### LOBRANO HOUSE HOURS

MONDAY	10 a.m.
through	to
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### THE

## HISTORIAN

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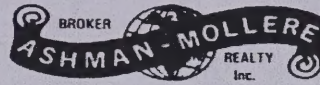
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